

Objective

Like all activities in the Find the Story module, this activity encourages students to discover stories from the people and places around them; to use as the raw material for their Story Valley projects.

This activity specifically encourages students to **find their own personal stories and those of their peers.**

We used this activity as part of a song writing unit – in which the class produced songs that could be performed or recorded as part of an overall theme chosen by the teacher. In that context, this activity was used to gather themes and/or stories to act as plot inspiration for song lyrics – and to teach methods and tools for finding inspiration in lyric writing.

The activity could also, however, be used as part of a different creative discipline.

Activity summary

This activity will take between 4 or 5 sessions depending on the numbers in the class.

It involves:

- Discussions around a theme chosen by the teacher
- Students bringing in objects of personal importance inspired by the theme, to exhibit in the class
- Students 'diving' into their peers objects; making notes on what each connotes or inspires for them
- Group discussion sharing the results of this process

Deliverers can choose any theme for the activity but this theme should be wide enough to allow a variety of sources of inspiration to be used and should be relevant to their own culture and use the local language.

Our programme was delivered in Scotland and used the Scots language and culture. The theme we chose was *"We're aw Jock Tamson's Bairns"* – a Scots phrase which essentially means "we're all the same".

Pre-activity preparation

Resources

- Chairs
- Pens
- Paper

Deliverer preparation

Before the activity, you will need to select a theme.

This theme should reflect the culture, and use the language of the location of the activity. This will provide structure and guidance for participants and encourage engagement in local culture and stories. The theme will also need to be broad enough to include participants from other cultures - something that everyone can relate to in some way.

You will also need to think of some discussion points around your theme that help to scaffold students' engagement.

Student preparation

Students will need to come into the room with open minds, prepared to respect and attempt to empathise with the contributions of their peers.

Running the activity

Step 1 – Introducing the theme

Small group discussions

30 minutes

The deliverer introduces the theme to the group; and explains its meaning. Students are split into groups to discuss the theme further, supported with prompt questions (perhaps displayed at the front of the room).

As mentioned, we used the phrase: “We’re Aw Jock Tamsons Bairns” as a theme. Our discussion prompts were:

- What other expressions do you know that refer to community?
- What does it mean to the individuals in the group?
- As a group, what is your combined understanding of the term?

Creating a written statement

20 minutes

Ask each group to create a written statement of what the group means to them – based on their discussion. It is important that this statement includes reference to any different cultures responding to the phrase in the group.

Outcome of this step: participants understand what the term means for their group. The group has a statement of this. The resulting statement will include other idioms or expressions or words from Scots, English or the other native languages in the group that represent their understanding of the term. Develop literacy through the written statement.

Step 2 – Bringing in an object

Homework

Participants will need to bring in an object (or source an image of an object) that they feel connects the group members through the concepts discovered in step one (a collective meaning in response to theme.)

In our creative discipline, this connects with the universal themes or universally understood ideas that are central to successful lyric writing (Davies, 1988). At this point the students are thinking of what connects them in the most basic and practical ways. A deeper understanding of this will be explored and expanded upon in the next step.

Outcome of this step: there is a curated group of objects to act as inspiration.

Step 3 – Sense bound ‘diving’

Individual work –writing descriptions

10 minutes

At this point, participants will exhibit the objects in the classroom (or as images online) and get class responses to the objects through the process of sense bound “diving” (Pattison, 2009, 2011).

Participants don’t “dive” on their own objects but create a simple one, or two sentence statement of why they chose it. They are encouraged to use words and expressions from their own languages at this point (including Scots).

Group work – timed ‘dives’

30 minutes

Sense bound “diving” involves using the body’s senses to interact with an object, and writing down your response.

Depending on numbers, participants can be told to pick a limited number of objects from their group on which to dive, the facilitator can assign these objects if necessary. Students can be given a worksheet (worksheet a) to support their dive.

Students dives should be timed – and can be 90 seconds, five or ten minutes. Each student can focus different objects or the same object. It is a really good tool for unlocking sense bound writing.

Sharing findings

20 minutes

After the dive, participants return to the object they brought in. One by one, they should share their personal story of the object in turn and invite the result of the dives for their object.

Success criteria

Things to look for to ensure this activity has been run successfully:

- The creative process has begun: students have gathered ideas
- All participants have had an input
- Participants have been introduced to unfamiliar words or phrases from other cultures.
- Students have written records of their dives.

Reference list

Davies, S. (1988) Successful lyric writing. Cincinnati: Writer’s Digest Books

Pattison, P. (2009) Writing better lyrics: the essential guide to powerful songwriting. Cincinnati: Writer’s Digest Books

Pattison, P. (2011) Songwriting without boundaries. Cincinnati: Writer’s Digest Books

Instructions

1. Choose an object: Set a timer for five minutes.
2. Write down everything that comes to mind about that object. Avoid storytelling at this point. You can use short phrases or individual words. You should aim to use all your senses. Just because you wouldn't normally taste something, doesn't mean it doesn't have a taste! I bet the table has a taste (don't try it!)

You should think about all the senses – that is sense bound writing:

Object:	
Sight	
Sound	
Taste	
Touch	
Smell	
Body*	
Motion**	

* Body is your awareness of your inner bodily functions. Think about the way your stomach churns when you are nervous or afraid, what it feels like to get cramp or dizzy. How does the object make you feel when you think about it or touch it or remember a story connected to it?

**Motion is roughly your sense of relationship to the world around you, when you are on a train and the one next to it moves, that feeling of disorientation you get. When children spin around and fall down. Has the object been a part of anything that made you feel that?

3. Now, review your original dive and acknowledge if anything is missing from your sense bound writing. Just be aware of it.

4. Now set a timer for 90 seconds! Do the same again – don't try to "fill the gaps" just let it flow.

(Pattison, 2011)

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